

### Transcript

A tracheostomy helps you breathe. While you recover from a tracheostomy, members of your healthcare team will make sure it is working well and you are comfortable with it before you leave the hospital.

When you first get your trach, you may have a pulse oximeter clipped to your fingertip to measure the amount of oxygen you are getting.

*“Your oxygen level is looking really good too.”*

You will also have humidified air or oxygen given to you through a trach collar that is attached in front of your trach. This will keep your airway moist and help you to keep your secretions from getting too thick.

While your trach is new, you will need to suction often to prevent any mucus build-up. You will also need to have your inner cannula and the skin around your trach stoma cleaned. In the beginning, your trach will need more care, but this will decrease as you heal.

As you heal, your healthcare provider will help you adjust to living with a trach. You may meet with a Speech Language Pathologist who will evaluate your ability to talk, eat, and drink with a trach tube.

Because a trach is below the vocal cords, you may wear a speaking valve to communicate.

*“Ahhh.”*

A speaking valve is a one way valve in which you breathe in through the trach and exhale through the mouth. This allows air to go to the vocal cords for speech. If you are not ready to speak yet, your healthcare provider will give you another way to communicate until you are, so you can ask questions and connect with your loved ones.

*“What about eating?”*

When you are ready to eat and drink, your Speech Pathologist will evaluate your ability to swallow.

*“First I want you to take a small piece of ice, that’s blue, and melt it in your mouth until you feel like you have to swallow.”*

Since breathing is different with a trach tube, a swallowing evaluation will help to ensure that food and liquid are not going down the wrong pipe and into the lungs.

*“How does that feel?”*

*“Cold.”*

*“Cold. Ok.”*

If you are going home from the hospital with your trach tube, before you leave, your healthcare provider will show you how to properly care for your trach at home, in order to be as comfortable as possible and at the same time, avoid infection and other complications. With practice you will feel confident and ready to perform your trach care on your own, after you leave the hospital.